

CIA/OSR/MEMO EF 751002 [REDACTED] COMMENTS ON MILITARY
SITUATION IN MID EAST CONF/NFD

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2 October 1975

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MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: [REDACTED] Comments on the Military
Situation in the Middle East

1. On 30 September 1975 [REDACTED]

met with [REDACTED]

The meeting, sponsored by Mr. Anthony Cordesman of OASD (I), was also attended by representatives of DIA and other offices within OASD.

The following paragraphs present his more noteworthy statements.

2. Israeli military philosophy toward war with Syria and Egypt has changed from one where there is a primary action on one front and a delaying action on the other to one where she must now be prepared to fight on two main fronts at the same time. The change was required because the Arabs have acquired large quantities of the most modern weapons, improved their training programs, and increased the proficiency of the individual soldier. (In fact, [REDACTED] believes the performance of the Syrian soldier now surpasses that of the Egyptian.) He went on to state that virtually every operational weapon is available in Europe and that any country, particularly those with vast oil revenues, can easily buy in quantity the most sophisticated weapons.

3. [REDACTED] the Israeli military reserve policy, where each student and worker has to contribute 75 to 80 days a year to active military service, has had a tremendous disruptive effect on the economy. As a result, the reserve

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system and branches of service are being reorganized to help alleviate this disruption. Unfortunately, he did not elaborate on what was entailed in the reorganization.

4. Concerning Arab military intentions, he believes that any hope for peace in the Middle East revolves around Egyptian President Sadat. Sadat, he said, is the only Arab leader currently moving toward recognition and peace with Israel. [REDACTED] however, questions the ability of Sadat to stay on top. In addition to the external pressure from the other Arab states, Sadat is faced with massive economic problems, which in the short-run do not appear soluable [REDACTED] Moreover, he believes that a country which cannot solve its internal economic problems generally will shift its interests to external activities, which in the Middle East usually means war with Israel. [REDACTED] pointed out that while the other Arab states (particularly Saudi Arabia) have given Egypt military aid--i.e., some \$4 billion, of which \$1.4 billion is to establish a domestic military industry within Egypt--they have not provided the large amount of aid required for economic development.

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5. If another Middle East war were to occur within the next few years, [REDACTED] doubts the ability of Egypt to remain aloof from the fighting. Assuming there is no war by the end of this decade, however, he believes that Egypt and Israel will have defused their hostility to such an extent that the relationship will act as a brake on other Arab states desiring war with Israel.

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6. [REDACTED] suggested that a disengagement agreement between Syria and Israel appears unlikely at this time, because Syria has given no indication that it is willing to shift in any way its military policy toward Israel. He also believes that Syrian President Asad's position is stronger than ever.

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7. Regarding Jordan, [REDACTED] the country is still not regarded by the Israelis as an important military threat. Jordan, however, is continuing to improve its military capabilities, most noticeably

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through the acquisition of new weapons systems, e.g., the US Hawk missile. This improved capability eventually could lead to one large Arab front against Israel, running from the Golan through Jordan to the Sinai. [REDACTED] Jordan now has some 500 tanks and one mechanized infantry division. It is building a second mechanized division and an airborne division, of which two airborne brigades have already been formed. Jordan, however, does not yet have the helicopters to support the airborne division and is currently trying to purchase them from Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Syria, and Iraq.

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8. Concerning Lebanon, he stated that it is only a matter of time before the Muslims win out in their conflict with the Christians. Although the Lebanese Christian population may have had a majority in the past, this is no longer the case because of two factors: a higher Muslim birth rate and a higher Christian emigration rate. [REDACTED] believes that when the new Arab/Muslim state comes into being, it will represent another military threat to Israel.

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9. Although [REDACTED] did not discuss the Palestinian question in any depth [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] he did state that the creation of a Palestinian nation was no longer really a key issue. This has resulted primarily from the continuing integration of the Palestinians into Israeli or Jordanian economies. He also believed that the PLO no longer represented the Palestinians and that, as a serious military threat, the organization was on the decline. [REDACTED] concluded that the Palestinian problem should be addressed only in the context of an overall settlement with all the Arab states.

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[REDACTED]
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